

Message Text

SECRET

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14

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O R 210830Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3164

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T JIDDA 8368

EXDIS

CAIRO ALSO FOR ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PAFOR, XF,SA,US,EG,JO,SY

SUBJECT: KING KHALID'S TRIP TO DAMASCUS; SAUDI EVEN-
HANDEDNESS IN LEBANON

1. KING KHALID'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS: DURING ASSISTANT
SECRETARY ATHERTON'S MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD DEC
20, THE CROWN PRINCE SAID THAT KING KHALID WOULD VISIT
DAMASCUS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THIS VISIT WAS BEING
BILLED AS ONE OF COURTESY, BUT IN POINT OF FACT IT WAS
BEING UNDERTAKEN FOR IMPORTANT POLICY REASONS. IN
BRIEF, THE SAUDI ARABIA GOVERNMENT WOULD TRY TO PREVENT
ANY FURTHER DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA
AND EGYPT, AND WOULD TRY TO CHECK ANY TENDENCIES THAT
JORDAN--WHILE IMPROVING ITS RELATIONS WITH SYRIA--WOULD
GO TOO FAR IN THIS DIRECTION AND ASSUME AN UNHELPFUL
POSTURE WITH REGARD TO EGYPT AND SINAI II. PRINCE
FAHD BELIEVED, FOR INSTANCE, SOME OF KING HUSSEIN'S
RECENT REMARKS ABOUT SINAI II COULD BETTER HAVE BEEN
LEFT UNSAID.

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2. THE PRINCE SAID SAUDI ARABIA DID NOT OBJECT TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN JORDAN AND SYRIA. THIS COULD CALM THE SITUATION IN THAT REGION. BUT HE DID NOT WANT JORDAN TO MOVE TOWARD SYRIA AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS RELATIONS WITH SADAT AND EGYPT. HE WILL MAKE THIS POINT TO JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER RIFA'L IN JIDDA ON DEC 21.

3. FAHD SAID THAT BEFORE KING KHALID AGREED TO VISIT SYRIA, PRESIDENT SADAT HAD BEEN INFORMED OF WHAT THE SAG INTENDED TO ACCOMPLISH. SAUDI ARABIA ALWAYS WANTED EGYPT TO BE INFORMED ABOUT WHAT IT DID AND WHY IT WAS DOING SO, TO AVOID ANY TROUBLESOME MISINTERPRETATIONS. THE SAG WOULD NOT HAVE WANTED SADAT TO HAVE GOTTEN THE IMPRESSION THAT BY THIS VISIT THE SAG WAS SUGGESTING IT SUPPORTED SYRIA'S CRITICISM OF EGYPT. FAHD THOUGHT THAT SINCE SAUDI ARABIA HAD QUITE GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA, THE SYRIAN REGIME WOULD LISTEN TO HIM, AND THAT HIS WORDS WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT. HE SAID, THOUGH, THAT ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT ASAD WAS IMSELF A MODERATE, THE RADICAL WING OF THE BA'TH PARTY FAVORED THE USSR AND CREATED A PROBLEM FOR ASAD OF BALANCE AND CONTROL.

4. LEBANON: REGARDING LEBANON, PRINCE FAHD COMMENTED THAT IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE, IT COULD BECOME DANGEROUS TO THE ENTIRE AREA. IN HIS OPINION, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF PRESIDENT FRANJIEH HAD BEEN MORE PERCEPTIVE ABOUT THE DANGERS CONFRONTING LEBANESE SOCIETY AND A LITTLE MORE CREATIVE CONCERNING SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS. BUT SAUDI ARABIA ABOVE ALL WANTED REASON TO PREVAIL AND CALM TO BE REESTABLISHED. IT DID NOT WANT ONE FACTION TO WIN OVER THE OTHER. IT WANTED PEACE AND SECURITY FOR ALL. FOR THESE REASONS, SAUDI ARABIA WAS NOT HELPING ANY SIDE IN THE CONFLICT AND NO ONE COULD CONCLUDE SAUDI ARABIA WAS PARTIAL, BIASED, OR MEDDLESOME IN THE CIVIL WAR.

5. ATHERTON SAID U.S. VIEWS ON JORDAN AND LEBANON CLOSELY PARALELLED THOSE OF SAUDI ARABIA. IN PARTICULAR HE WELCOMED SAUDI EFFORTS TO HEAL EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN SPLIT,
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WHICH WAS HARMFUL TO PEACE EFFORTS AND COULD LEAD TO SELF-DEFEATING COMPETITIVE BIDDING AT JANUARY SC DEBATE.
HORAN

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NNN

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